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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: SOMALILAND: UK DIASPORA HIGHLIGHT NEED FOR
GOVERNANCE ASSISTANCE, OFFER SUPPORT

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Members of the UK-based Somaliland Diaspora - including representatives from the three political parties, NGOs, and civil society organizations - told the Political Minister Counselor November 2 that what Somaliland needs most is assistance in developing governance and democracy institutions, especially within Parliament. They expressed optimism that elections would take place, probably in early 2010, and said that the silver-lining to the recent political crisis was installation of a National Electoral Commission (NEC) in which Somalilanders have confidence, which in turn will increase the level of confidence in the elections and its results. They offered the support of the NGOs they represent as implementing partners in Somaliland, suggesting the Diaspora could provide a link between the international community and local organizations and institutions on the ground. They noted that their organizations would not be in a position to deliver governance capacity-building programs, and said that is where the USG and other international partners could provide useful programming. They expressed frustration that the UK's Department for International Development has not worked through the Diaspora more, as they felt it had promised to do. They also offered familiar arguments in favor of Somaliland's recognition, saying it would solve many development-related problems, spur on democratic development, improve security in the region, and provide a meaningful example for south central Somalia. DFID contacts said they had considered a special development fund for Somali Diaspora groups, but instead opted for encouraging UK-based Somali groups to apply for funding through the recently launched "The Common Ground Initiative," which aims to strengthen the capacity of small and Diaspora organizations in the UK that work in international development. DFID has also recently begun publishing a newsletter for the Somali Diaspora in the UK. End Summary.

Meeting the Somaliland Diaspora

¶2. (SBU) Members of the UK-based Somaliland Diaspora met with the Political Minister Counselor on November 2 to express their views on the political situation in Somaliland, make suggestions for leveraging the Diaspora community, and build their case for statehood. Among the representatives were the following: Somaliland TV producer and KULMIYA representative Ahmed Adare, UDUB representative Yusuf Duale Suleiman, NGO Somaliland Public Affairs Committee founder Awale Elmi, UCID representative Asha Yusuf, Somaliland Recognition Action Group Chair Lulu Farah Todd, UCID representative Saeed Omer, Somali Youth Development Resource Center Director Ibrahim

Yusuf Isse, Somalilander community organizer Id Hassan, Somali Society Europe chair Abdi Abdillahi Jibril, Somaliland activist Bilan Abdi Hussein Yusuf, London Somali Youth Forum founder (and former IVLP participant) Mohamed Hassan Aden, and Somali Cultural and Community Associations Director Mohamed Maigag.

Hopeful for Early 2010 Elections

13. (SBU) Representatives of the three political parties expressed optimism that with the resolution of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) membership, elections would take place soon, but probably not until early 2010. They suggested that since the previous NEC membership was so poorly perceived by most Somalilanders, the silver-lining to the political crisis was installation of a NEC in which the Somalilanders have confidence. That in turn will increase confidence in the conduct of the polls and the results.

What Somaliland Needs: Governance Capacity Building

14. (SBU) NGO representatives said that what Somaliland needs most is developing governance and democratic institutions, especially within the Somaliland Parliament. They suggested the USG and other international partners should focus on parliamentary training and accountability mechanisms within government because current organizations working in Somaliland, including the ones they represent, do not have the capacity to deliver these sorts of programs. They

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explained most of their organizations work in the health and education sectors. This support comes in the form of members of the Diaspora working either as individuals or as organizations to deliver programs in specific areas through local Somaliland-based NGOs, through family/clan systems, or through individual connections. They said that "hometown associations" (a more formalized clan-based connection whereby members of the same clan based in the UK support the communities of their clans back in Somaliland) has been particularly successful in setting up health clinics and schools.

15. (SBU) NGO representatives in particular expressed frustration that the UK government was not involving them more in program delivery, especially after the Department for International Development (DFID) did extensive consultation with the Somali Diaspora community about its three-year country development plan for Somalia in 2009. DFID representatives later explained that DFID ministers decided not to approve a three-year plan, opting instead for a year-on-year plan for Somalia. Additionally, DFID officials decided that given the lack of capacity in the UK Somali Diaspora for program delivery, DFID would not create a separate fund for the Somali Diaspora groups. They are instead encouraging the groups to apply for funding through the recently launched "The Common Ground Initiative," which aims to strengthen the capacity of small and Diaspora organizations in the UK that work in international development in Africa. DFID has also recently begun publishing a newsletter for the Somali Diaspora in the UK. (More on The Common Group Initiative and other programs to follow septel.)

Recognition

16. (SBU) All representatives argued for Somaliland's recognition, highlighting its unique historical case and the strong legal claims to its borders. Making familiar arguments, they suggested recognition would solve many of Somaliland's development-related problems, spur on democratic development, improve security in the region, and provided a meaningful example for south central Somalia. They said the

African Union would not ever make a decision about Somaliland's independence because there are so many undemocratic leaders in the AU and because individual countries, not multinational organizations, recognize other countries.

Continuing the Conversations

17. (SBU) They offered to establish a core group of Somalilanders in the UK Diaspora to continue the dialogue with the USG and to provide a list of UK-based organizations providing development assistance in Somaliland.

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